

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 2012

Prescott Resort and Conference Center - Prescott

Committee Members Present

Jim O'Haco, Livestock Grower
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
Steve Carmickle, Sportsmen Group
Kurt Davis, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department
Joe King, Livestock Grower
Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group
June Shoemaker, Bureau of Land Management

Committee Members Absent

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group
Dennis Moroney, Livestock Grower
Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest
George Reiners, Sportsmen Group

Others Present

Maria Baier, Arizona State Land Commissioner
Chris Lowman, Arizona State Land Department
Jim and Sue Chilton, Livestock Growers
Craig Shelley, Livestock Grower
Frank Krentz, Livestock Grower
Fred Ruskin, Livestock Grower
Kent Henry, Livestock Grower
Walter and Frances Meyer, Livestock Growers
Susan Krentz, Livestock Grower
Jesse Davis, Livestock Grower
Bas Aja, AZ Cattlemen's Association
Wally Armer, Livestock Grower
Patrick Bray, AZ Cattle Growers Association
Jeff and Meghan Homack, Livestock Growers
Keith Cannon, Livestock Grower
Bill Elkins, Livestock Grower
Roy Moore, Livestock Grower
Jack Carlisle, Livestock Grower
Jock Saksen, Livestock Grower
Mike Wear, Livestock Grower
Mike Macauley, Livestock Grower
Ed and Janie Monzingo, Livestock Growers

Bill Brake, Livestock Grower
Katie Cline, Livestock Grower
Roger and Sandy Warner, Livestock Growers
A.J. Dickens, Global Resources
Jack and Catherine Mann, Livestock Growers
Leroy Tucker, Livestock Grower
Al Eiden, Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD
Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD
Andy Clark, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Michelle Kinseth, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Kurt Davis was present in place of Commissioner Norm Freeman, who was unable to attend. Commissioner Davis introduced himself and welcomed the participation of the thirty-three attendees from the Arizona Cattle Growers Association (ACGA) Convention who were sitting in on this public meeting. He told the audience that they should also feel free to call or e-mail him at any time to discuss conflicts and issues that are facing landowners and lessees.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

Stephen Williams gave an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). He shared some success stories from his department. ASLD has reached an agreement with the city of Scottsdale regarding Granite Mountain – an area of State Trust land which the city is purchasing over time for open space and which is also very popular for recreation. A Special Land Use Permit gives Scottsdale more authority for enforcement, management, and maintenance of the area's infrastructure. ASLD encourages this type of partnership with agencies; the city of Scottsdale is the first to enter into this kind of agreement. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has also applied for a Special Land Use Permit for areas of State Trust land intermingled within Federal lands north and west of Phoenix. The two agencies are working to reach an agreement, which should improve the effectiveness of the BLM's Resource Management and Travel Management Plans. ASLD is tagging on with the Coronado National Forest's efforts on travel management and access to some of the Sky Island mountain ranges. Mr. Williams will be meeting with Al Eiden regarding improving coordination and communication between the agencies in regards to the Landowner Relations Program's access agreements, which effect ASLD.

June Shoemaker provided an update from the BLM. She informed the Committee of the progress on Resource Management Plans for the Sonoran Desert. She said that the BLM has decided not to shut down an area near Tucson to recreational shooting, but rather to

work with user groups and agencies to address the serious abuses in the area. Ms. Shoemaker answered a question regarding wild horse sanctuaries – she said the Federal objective is to find large sanctuaries, and nothing meeting that objective has been proposed in Arizona. There are only some small holding facilities available in Arizona.

Tami Emmett, the representative from the Coronado National Forest, was called out of state on fire detail; so there were no updates from the U.S. Forest Service.

Landowner Relations Program Update

Al Eiden gave the update from the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). For the benefit of all the people sitting in on the meeting, he briefly explained the varied programs LRP has to help with access issues and habitat improvement projects. He said, within the last six months, 19 access agreements had been completed which provided funding for ranch improvements in exchange for access to or across certain parts of a landowner's private property. Also finalized were 15 cooperative habitat improvement projects which helped fund projects without any kind of access tied to the agreement. Mr. Eiden said 40-50 Adopt-a-Ranch projects are completed every year to help mitigate access issues and improve relations. He said that regional LRP specialists had been brought on board to get out to more ranches and create new partnerships. Through the Farm Bill, a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Improvement Program grant has provided funds which we have used for on-the-ground projects on 25 ranches and also to fund a GIS specialist who has created a web-based mapping tool to identify important access points. Mr. Eiden informed the group that LRP has also been doing a lot to increase outreach and promote recreational ethics. He shared a video which the AZ Lottery had recently made to highlight how Heritage Funds are used by LRP for working with ranchers; to view the video, visit www.arizonalottery.com/howthemoneyhelps and click on the first photo under the "Environmental Issues" heading in the right-hand column. The video led to some discussion about various methods for treating invasive trees.

Jim O'Haco told the group that anyone is welcome to submit nominations for the Game and Fish Commission's Wildlife Habitat Stewardship award.

GIS Web-Based Tools

Michelle Kinseth, LRP's GIS Specialist, gave a presentation on some of the new web-based mapping tools available through the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD). The easy to use tools allow users to pull up different map layers, which provide considerable amounts of varied information. HabiMap is especially useful for landscape-level planning purposes, with layers for grazing allotments, species distributions, and waters, among other things. Fish & Boat AZ provides ample information about lakes, boating, and fishing. Recreational Access AZ is a mapping tool LRP created to show rights-of-way and formal access agreements which AGFD has with ranches around the state; it includes access restrictions for various ranches, such as walk-in only, sign-in required, etc. A mapping tool will also be available which specifically addresses invasive species.

Staying Informed on Proposed Legislation

This agenda item was postponed because the presenter was absent.

Issues Facing Ephemeral Desert Grazing

Rancher Craig Shelley spoke about how recreational OHV use is causing problems for ephemeral ranching on the deserts of Pinal and Maricopa Counties. He said the issues are different from those faced by many ranchers in other parts of the state because the tens of thousands of cows brought in for the temporary grazing seasons are unfamiliar with these ranches and where the alternate water sources are located. Hundreds of cows may bunch up at a single water hole, and being unaccustomed to the high OHV use, the cattle may be easily spooked and stampeded. Over the last twelve years, Mr. Shelley had worked with multiple partners and tried varied approaches to address the heavy OHV use on his ranch just outside the Phoenix metropolitan area. His problems were dramatically reduced when much of his ranch was closed to vehicles due to PM-10 dust concerns; however, many of the problems moved to neighboring ranches. From the experience on his ranch and review of various surveys and research, Mr. Shelley suggested the following measures to deal with the problem: increase law enforcement, increase fines, confiscate vehicles in some instances, and decrease the number of routes in key areas, such as near tanks. He suggested amending the current OHV laws to divert most of the funds going to education and use them to increase funding for enforcement. However, the latter proposal would necessitate reopening the OHV legislation to another vote, which could be potentially risky.

Steve Carmickle spoke of some of the resources which the OHV organizations offer to help ranchers address issues. He commented on some research that opposed that which was previously presented. Mr. Carmickle said OHV recreation has a positive economic impact on the state; he suggested that a balanced approach, including education, is important. He added that he is supportive of closing certain areas, but in general, closures are not a good solution. Many people got involved in the discussion. Mr. Shelley admitted that the nine new OHV Officers and flight patrols have been a big help, but added that even more enforcement is needed. Larry Audsley agreed about the importance of enforcement and added that public pressure also needs to be put on county district attorneys and judges to support enforcement by imposing fines and community service. Mr. Shelley told the ranchers that were complaining about OHV's that they need to be proactive and initiate contacts with their local Game and Fish office to find out about law enforcement and other programs that can help.

Survey Results and Access Strategy

Al Eiden gave a PowerPoint Presentation to explain the results from a recent survey of ranchers and users regarding recreational access. Although only 4 out of the 300 ranchers surveyed suggested that landowner tags might be desirable, a discussion ensued regarding landowner tags. Commissioner Davis stated that, although no options are off the table, the AGF Commission opposes the landowner tag option because it goes against the North American Model of Wildlife Management and could lead to only the richest people being able to hunt. Sue Chilton said that she is not supportive of landowner tags due to the fact that the state constitution gave wildlife to the State and reneging on that

constitutional right would be wrong. She stated that she was, however, supportive of finding other ways to incentivize landowners to allow access. Mrs. Chilton, as well as other ACGA leadership, said landowner tags would lead to a bad public opinion of the ranching community. Since the survey made it very evident that there was no single solution, Mr. Eiden went on to describe varied strategies the AGFD is looking into to address access issues. The approaches involve multiple themes including focusing on people - building good relations and putting LRP staff in various parts of the state; offering flexible and varied incentives and programs; increasing outreach, education, and marketing including ethics and web tools; and developing varied funding sources such as grants, partnerships, and access stamps. AGFD is working directly with ACGA on a pilot program to try out new methods on a sampling of various types of ranches.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

There was not much time remaining for this agenda item. Wanting to be sure that the OHV issues presented by Mr. Shelley got addressed, the Committee approved a motion that they research the problem and develop a proposed strategy which could then be discussed at the January meeting. They also approved a motion that LRP pursue the pilot program and provide an update at the following summer meeting in conjunction with the ACGA Convention. Rancher Frances Meyer brought up a specific problem associated with an organized coyote hunt on her ranch, which resulted in a lack of trust with the local AGFD officials who dealt with the issue; Al Eiden and various Committee members provided suggestions for dealing with the issue.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in Phoenix in conjunction with the “Meet the AGF Commission Event” on January 12, 2013.

Action Items:

1. Develop a proposed strategy to address OHV issues which could then be discussed at the January meeting (Committee members and LRP staff)
2. Pursue the pilot program and provide an update at the summer meeting (LRP staff)
3. Meeting minutes distributed (LRP staff)
4. Coordinate next meeting and inform Committee (LRP staff)
5. Committee discussion/vote on next Committee Chair/Co-Chair at January meeting